

98-418

SWEETWATER AUTHORITY

505 GARRETT AVENUE
POST OFFICE BOX 2328
CHULA VISTA, CALIFORNIA 91912-2328
(619) 420-1413
FAX (619) 425-7469



GOVERNING BOARD

J.S. SKI WOLNIEWICZ, CHAIRMAN
MARGARET COOK WELSH, VICE CHAIR
JAMES "JIM" DOUD
SUE JARRETT
BUD POCKLINGTON
GEORGE H. WATERS
CARY F. WRIGHT
WANDA AVERY
TREASURER
DIAN J. REEVES
SECRETARY

November 18, 1998

Lester Snow, Executive Director
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 9th Street Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Snow and Panel Representatives:

Sweetwater Authority would like to add its voice to that of the Metropolitan Water District in expressing concerns about recent actions of the CALFED Program. This agency believes the move to postpone decisions about structural changes in the Bay-Delta unduly delays needed improvements in water quality and public health protection. In addition, it leaves urban Southern California water customers, like the 174,000 residents of Chula Vista, National City, and Bonita, which are served by this agency, without necessary reliability improvements.

Sweetwater Authority, like other Metropolitan member and sub-member agencies, has invested heavily in programs to conserve water and to expand local supplies. These investments have been made with the understanding that one of the returns on such investments, as codified by the Best Management Practices Agreement, is improved cooperation in the distribution of statewide water resources. Currently, we are constructing a brackish groundwater demineralization facility to provide approximately 20 percent of daily water demand, investing more than \$14 million in Phase I. A second \$10 million phase is planned for 2003. These investments are not short-term measures. They have been implemented to permanently change the water demands we place upon the Bay-Delta and other sources of imported water. As an example of one relatively small agency's commitment, we believe our projects should lessen some of the Northern California interests' fears that Southern California wishes to "drain" the Delta or abandon long-term Delta improvement programs.

Sweetwater Authority has experienced the realities of operations changed by environmental restrictions. We have found that delays in reaching "hard" solutions to water project issues results in increased costs on all fronts. In fact, delays of several years seem routine to the environmental approval process. Our effort to obtain the approvals necessary to create a managed habitat for the least Bell's vireo, for example, took eight years. We feel it is extremely short-sighted to build an additional seven-year waiting period into the process itself.

We would also recommend that those on the panel who fear growth in Southern California pay heed to the overwhelmingly negative response by local voters to San Diego County's proposed

*A Public Water Agency,
Serving National City, Chula Vista and Surrounding Areas*

G - 0 0 7 2 9 1

G-007291

Letter to Lester Snow, CALFED Bay-Delta Program
November 18, 1998
Page 2

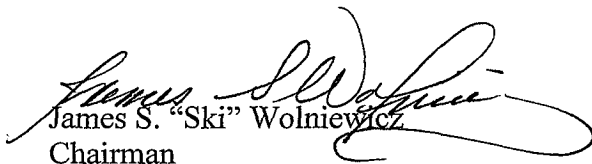
"Rural Heritage and Watershed Initiative." This initiative, which sought to preserve a portion of the County as large agricultural plots, was seen by its advocates as a way to preserve natural resources, open space and a way of life. The initiative was defeated by opponents who pointed out that the growth currently planned for those areas would have to be channeled to existing communities, creating increased population densities where residents already feel overcrowded. Similar rules could apply if Southern California's water supplies cannot accommodate expected growth, causing "our" growth to move to Northern California, where local water supplies are more abundant.


As a member of the San Diego County Water Authority and a sub-member of the Metropolitan Water District, Sweetwater Authority has supported the significant investments made by our region to directly support the CALFED process. At this date, we also strongly support the Policy Position Paper For The CALFED Bay-Delta Program adopted by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. We concur with the District's *Objectives and Concerns*, its statement of *What CALFED Must Provide*, and its projections of the *Consequences of CALFED's Failure*. We will continue to commit the resources for our share of *What Metropolitan Will Provide*.

We strongly urge the principals of the CALFED Program to seriously consider the issues raised by Metropolitan's position paper. Our communities cannot thrive without the assurance that the CALFED process will yield necessary improvements in water quality and reliability. Our customers cannot accept a seven-year delay which will only increase the costs attached to solving the issues, while they also are bearing the costs to improve local supplies. We concur with Metropolitan that any phased approach MUST include completion of all feasibility studies and environmental permitting during its first phase, to avoid further delays during later phases.

Respectfully,

SWEETWATER AUTHORITY


James S. "Ski" Wolniewicz
Chairman


Richard A. Reynolds
General Manager

Enclosure

cc: Dennis Cushman, Director of Public Affairs, San Diego County Water Authority
Robert Comperz, Acting Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Water District of
Southern California
General Managers of San Diego County Water Authority Member Agencies

\\RITA\ADMIN\calfed